

No 21

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An
Inaugural Essay
On

Melancholia & Hypochondriasis
For The Degree of Doctor of Medicine
In the University of Pennsylvania

By
Thomas. S. Charlton
Of Georgia

Philadelphia. Dec. 1827

Aquam memento satus in arduis serare mentem
Hor.

1842

August 1st

Received of the
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Treasury

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Aquam memento solum in arduis servare mentem.

— Sorrow, and the numerous
ills of life do not exist without their an-
tidotes; these are, an elasticity of mind, and
a tendency to hope, which mitigate the
acuteness of affliction, and buoy in dis-
pendency the sufferer, from what would
otherwise be its frequent termination,
despair. — This self reviving faculty
is not possessed equally by all, and to
its absence or presence in a slight de-
gree, are frequently to be attributed,
the diversified phenomena of mental
aberration, from the retired gloom of
the misanthrope, to the hallucinations
of the enthusiast, or the incoherent ra-
vings of the maniac. —

— Among the diseases at-
tendant on this loss of moral equilibri-
um Melancholia assumes a prominent

-stasis, I have united to this Hypochondriasis. — The distinctions commonly made between these designate the first as a disease of mental origin, having for its location the sensorium, and the latter as one caused by gastric, or enteric disorders. I think however that they will be found to approximate, both as regards their causes, and indications of treatment, and that commencing as they may a ~~mutual~~ conversion of symptoms takes place in their more advanced stages. Melancholia seldom existing long without corporeal derangement, and, *vice versa*, — The symptoms that characterise Dyspepsia are generally the first that present themselves in Hypochondriasis; costiveness, acid, and other eructations either in the disease, accompanied by oppression and sometimes pain in the epigastrium after food, a want of ap-

- pitite or a depraved one, a feeling of
 general lassitude and muscular debili-
 ty &c. - Not being combated by their
 most successful antagonists, change
 of climate, simplicity of diet, exercise,
 and regularity of habits, the intel-
 lect becomes morbid in its functions,
 the attention is directed to a multi-
 plicity of diseases with which the
 patient supposes himself to be ha-
 rassed, or in his "mind's eye" he is
 metamorphosed into some fantas-
 tic form of his own or other species
 of animal: One fancies himself ex-
 panded into Cyclopean dimensions;
 another, classes himself with Homer's
Pygmy and deprecates his being crush-
 ed by the human giants he meets:-
 It is to be remarked, that the mind
 is perverted but on one point, ad-
 dress the Hypochondriac on subjects
 of common conversation or even on

those of an abstruse nature, and you will often find his reasoning acute & pertinent, there is but one rock on which it is wrecked.—The variety of whim occurring here has from time immemorial afforded abundant food for satirists, but he who endeavours to eradicate by argument, or irony the perversions of judgement thus arising, may well be said to "eat at scars".—

—Though in this affection the mind is directed to supposed disease, and in the most distinct cases is peculiarly appropriated to this subject, unconnected with the total direction commonly present in Melancholia, still there are other forms of it in which a striking similarity exists between them, and where as before remarked, they have reciprocal symptoms.—No cases occur, which, though they may be of gastric origin afford but little symptoma—

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- tic evidence of such causes, while the patient not only fancies himself ill, (as all hypochondriacs do) but desponds as regards the termination of all the occurrences of life in which he may be engaged. — If a distinction can be made between this and Melancholia it must be but slight. —

— Causes. An irritability of the gastric nerves has by a late writer been advanced as the exciting cause of Hypochondriasis, and this opinion I think (as far as I am capable of judging) correct. Irritation is a prelude to all functional derangement, and as a concomitant, or in this place a sequel, we may place capillary congestion and inert action, believing it to be a law of the human economy that a tonic state of the nerves and sanguiferous ^{arteries} should exist inversely; — this is exemplified in Typhus mitior & praeior

where a violent and excited nervous action is evinced by subsultus tendinum &c and an opposite or debilitated state of the arteries by the small and intermitting pulse; the quiescent state of the pulse in tetanus confirms this and the *citiora de genere hoc* are too numerous for an essay. The causes of these varying actions are among the arcana of physics, but from their effects many practical inferences may be drawn. — The disease may be brought on thus; the presence of stimuli in the stomach, the suppuration of morpils, the use of food with difficulty digested, &c produce a state of nervous irritation in that viscus; this is the first step of Dr. Chapman's theory of inflammation and it is probable that the second also takes place, viz, a capillary congestion, that this may be the case, and that an effort of nature is made to overcome it, is evinced by the flushed

face of most persons after food and accelerated pulse; these being exertions of the system to propel the sluggish fluids of the extreme vessels congested in a slight degree by the causes mentioned, but as these causes of irritation act with much greater energy in the stomachs of the debilitated or debauched, the consequent congestion will be proportionate, and there will not only exist a febrile and excited state of ^{the} system in general, but the secretory vessels will become morbid in their functions, and the gastric juice will be imperfectly produced or be vitiated, the irritation often extending to the intestines produces thin and watery discharges. The disease thus radiating from its primary location the stomach, extends itself and involves at one period or other nearly every function and system. The intimate connection existing between the defective

und sensorial functions will readily account for the subsequent symptoms of mental alienation; how this intercourse of morbid and salutary sympathy takes place we know not, but that it does so is no longer a subject for investigation. — On the whole, there is much reason to believe that most mental affections (except those arising from causes acting locally upon the brain, such as injuries, tumours, &c.) are based on gastric disorder, or at least, that the latter greatly predisposes to them. —

Functional disease of the liver often accompanies the other derangements and evinces itself by the usual symptoms; it has happened that forms of Hypochondriasis have been found to arise from a collection of vitiated bile in the intestines, in these cases a brisk purgative will afford temporary relief, but as the

generative principle will still exist it can only be a paliative. —

— Melancholia, in those predisposed to it is brought into action by events tending to have a permanent & depressing effect on the cheerfulness and affections. Sudden reverses of fortune and unlooked for pecuniary distresses produces often in him who is otherwise though "indolis pauperum pati," a state of furious mania; it acts differently in an other temperament and a condition of silent gloom and depression occurs. — Another, and frequent cause is the dissolution of those united by the ties of love, friendship, or consanguinity; the vacancy left in the affections by the loss of these, the deep regret with which the memory occurs to their worth and virtues, and the sensation of bereavement united with —

that recollection tend all in susceptible and feeling minds to melancholic habits, often nursed by retirement and retrospection. — A perversion of the mild and consoling attributes of religion has often led the judgment astray, how often and how sadly, the self isolated devoutness of Asiatic superstition and the victims of fanaticism every where will witness. In our more civilised age and climes ignorance, and mistaken zeal, still misrepresent the attributes of divinity, and harass with imaginary horrors the credulous or imbecile. — Of all forms of Melancholia this is the most hopeless and disponding, how can it be otherwise when in the imagination of the sufferer the cares and sorrows of this life pass but away to be succeeded by an inevitable endless, and predestined state of torments and misery, to his ear the heu-

ings of infuriated demons is omnipresent and all the poetical paraphernalia of the damned to his eye. — Avarice, disappointed love or ambition, jealousy, and in fine all the emotions and passions have their victims of this class, for in proportion to the strong power they exercise over the judgement is the susceptibility of their persons to their morbid influences. —

The symptoms are modified by the various humperaments of the patient exhibiting themselves sometimes by universal discontent and disgust to all around, often, to those who were in a sane state the objects of affection. — He who is, & who use the language of metaphor possessed of this demon, can never experience the few rays of felicity which glimmer on existence, for that life is but to him a state of warfare with the honors of his diseased intellect which exerts a personal influ-

ence and is most perceptible in the expression of countenance; though fortune may have lavished her favours, though by those who know not the secrets of his "prison house" he would be called happy, still his mind pregnant with ill converts blessings into curses, benefits into evils, he is either the supposed sufferer under a multitude of calamities, or he considers himself as the object of general prosecution, the focus in which is concentrated the malevolence of man and nature. Sorrow must life be thus passed uncheered by social union, ignorant of hope, and abandoned to despair. This is the form of Melancholia which I think approximates most to Hypochondriasis, betraying in its course many indications of gastric origin; these sometimes occur even in valde sanctis. — The poet Cowper was a melancholic of this cast. —

Not always however is the melancholic identified with the repulsive bearing of the misanthrope, different is the case when he endowed with that idiosyncrasy of feelings and character, designated a "warm heart" uniting, in this temerarious of emotions, a vivid imagination, and great moral sensibility, falls under the ban of this disease, he looks forward to the felicity which his creative mind had promised him and is only aroused from visions by the realities of sorrows & disappointments. — the greater the tendency to hope, and fertile the imagination, the consequent depression will be in proportion, and disgusted with illusions of that happiness he cannot possess, the sufferer endeavours to find in total abstraction from what were once considered as the delights of society, in the deep solitude of the forest or on

the lonely shore of the sea to drown in
the lethi of absence or oblivion the memo-
ry of blighted affections and evanescent
joys; to him, —

"Life is as tedious as a winter tale
telling the dull ear of a drowsy man"

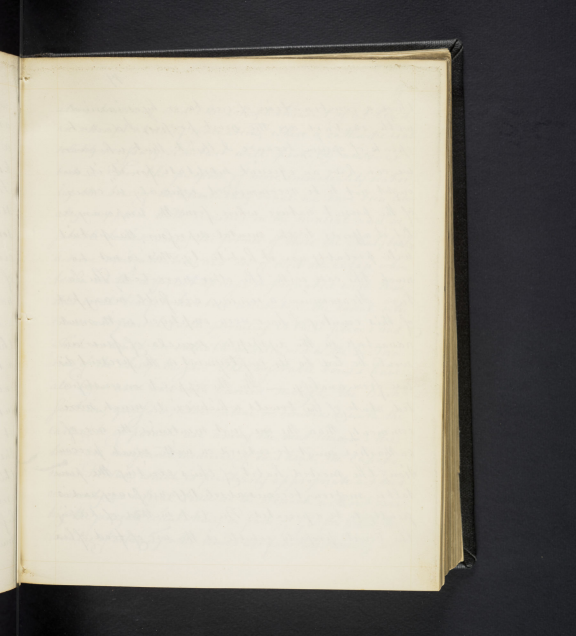
— In closing the histo-
ry of the symptoms of melancholia, it
may be remarked, that temporary affec-
tions of this nature may be enumerated
among the curses of our race; for, who
is there whose mind has not experien-
ced that universal defectiveness arising
from no evident cause, but exercising a
despotic sway over his judgement and
incapacitating it from its functions? —
These moments are more or less frequent
with all men, and though not to be clas-
sed as diseases from their influence and
recurrence are formidable to human fe-
licity. —

Treatment. — These diseases consist of such a combination of symptoms, that it is impossible to treat them on general principles, we must combat each by its individual indication and remove them successively. As directed to the restoration of the digestive functions the method of cure will not vary much from that proper in *Dyspepsia*. — To answer the purpose of evacuants when indicated by the foulness of the tongue, &c. emetics are the most proper remedies, they not only answer this purpose but tend to abstract the mind from its habitual direction to illness. It is generally conceded that the salutary effect of emetics are not limited to the time of their operation, and in no disease do they act with greater variety of benefit than in the present. He, who has suffered for days under gastric uneasiness and consequent peevishness and oppression, and

who after a long though ineffectual attempt at relief by cathartics, has succeeded by a single dose of Ipecac or Tart. Ant. will know how to appreciate their effects.

They appear to act by causing a revolution from the congested capillaries to some other part, and by equalising the circulation; they must be the pioneers of more immediate rotorants which cannot be ventured on prior to their use.

There are no symptoms occurring in the course of this disease that demand a more unremitting attention than those indicating the state of the bowels. Assuming a great variety of forms, this at one period evinces costiveness, at another a constant and watery diarrhoea; this latter most commonly arises from irritation and astringents would be useless or prejudicial; the class of rotatives must be called in requisition and of

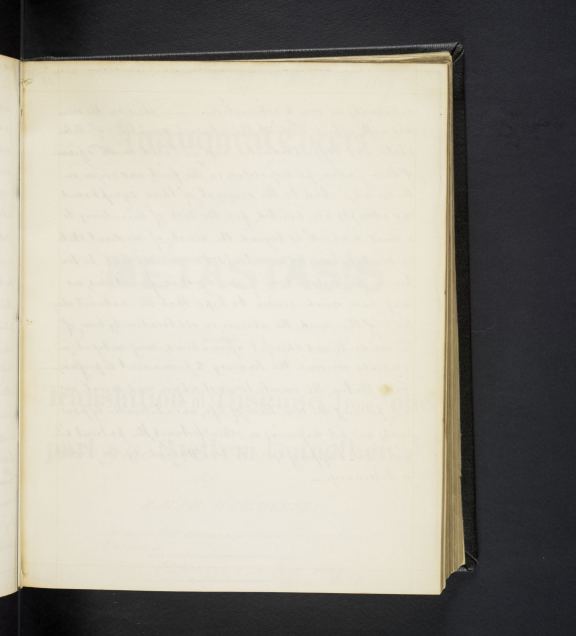


these, a combination of cicuta or hyoscinum with stuart are the most proper; I do not speak of opium, because I think that wherever we can have an efficient substitute for it, its use ought not to be recommended, especially in cases of the present nature where from the temporary relief it affords to the mental depression, the patient will probably use it habitually; this is not so much the case with the other narcotics. The Solutura Stramonium, a remedy acceptable in any part of this country I have seen employed with much advantage in the dyspeptic sequelae of fever and would be led to its employment in the present disease from analogy. — In the opposite or constipated state of the bowels which exists much more commonly than the one just mentioned the use of cathartics must be entered on with much precaution; the morbid habit of thus exciting the peristaltic motion becomes absolutely necessary, and is greatly to be deprecated; The best method of keeping the bowels properly soluble is the use of food of lax-

active tendency, and the establishment of at least an attempt at daily evacuation, where a cathartic is absolutely necessary. Linctus will probably answer best. — For the purpose of more immediately restoring the tone of the alimentary canal we have been liberally supplied with remedies in the mineral and vegetable tonics, among the former of these the chalybeates deserve most attention, and are of most advantage when taken at the different springs impregnated with them; this local benefit has been attributed the social intercourse and general bustle prevailing at these places and which no doubt are valuable auxiliaries in the restoration of the cheerfulnefs. — The vegetable tonics have all been used and with varied success. the Bark Jambian, quassia, either alone or combined with the carbonate of potash are among the most common. We have an indigenous medicine of this kind, the *Eupatorium Filadelficum* which is peculiarly appropriate and most commonly as a local tonic on the stomach without exciting the general circulation; in parts of Georgia when the facilities of obtaining other tonics are few this remedy is

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The first thing I noticed when I stepped
out of the train was a cool breeze
that seemed to wash over me. The
city was alive with the sounds of
cars and people, a constant hum
that I had never experienced before.
The buildings were tall and modern,
reaching up towards the sky like
giant fingers. The streets were
wide and clean, with cars moving
smoothly along. I felt a sense of
wonder and excitement as I took
in everything around me. The
city was so different from what I
was used to, and I was so happy
to be here. I had heard so much
about it, and now I was finally
seeing it with my own eyes. The
city was beautiful, and I was
in luck. I had found a great place
to stay, and I was going to have
a great time. I was going to
explore every corner of this city,
and I was going to make some
great memories. I was going to
have a great time, and I was
going to love every minute of it.



deservedly in much estimation. — These are the remedies with which we treat the physical symptoms of Melancholia and Hypochondriasis and as based on the opinion of their pastie, predisposition in the first, and origin in the second, — And to the removal of these symptoms our attempts are limited, for, the task of "ministering to a mind diseased" is beyond the reach of medical skill or mortal knowledge. Should the morbid link be broken by the restoration of the digestive functions, we may have much reason to hope that the natural elasticity of the mind, the absence or obliteration by time of the incidents, and cheerful associations, may mitigate, and eventually overcome the tendency to permanent depression. And, that in the consolations of religion and moral action, pursuing the even tenor of life, unshaken by prosperity and not despairing in other fortunes, the patient will find that happiness, not to be attained by the Leat, or Physician. —